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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 13 October 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Loedel ..... (Uruguay)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chairman** said that the meeting would be suspended in order to continue the informal consultations on draft resolutions and a draft decision on the subject of decolonization.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

Agenda item 81: Effects of atomic radiation
(A/58/46)

2. **Mr. Leon Romeiro** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, introduced the report of the Committee on the work of its fifty-first session (A/58/46). Since its establishment, the Scientific Committee had been the authoritative international forum for the study of sources of ionizing radiation and their effects. Furthermore, the Committee was studying new problems relating inter alia to the increased global level of radiation, the accumulation of radioactive wastes and the genetic danger posed by small doses of radiation. In carrying out its mandate, the Committee was guided by the principles of independence and neutrality.

3. The findings of the Scientific Committee were used by Governments and organizations in evaluating the level of radiation risk, developing radiological protection measures and elaborating safety norms, as well as by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in carrying out its statutory responsibilities. Furthermore, the data submitted by the Committee helped the General Assembly in developing recommendations, in particular on international cooperation in the fields of health, sustainable development and maintenance of international peace and security. Brazil therefore supported the continuation of the Scientific Committee's work.

4. **Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the members of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), as well as of Bolivia and Chile, said that the international community needed to be able to study the effects of atomic radiation on populations and that the results of such studies should serve to complement existing data on the effects of radiation on individual human beings. She attached importance to the Scientific Committee's work on evaluating the danger posed by natural sources of radiation. She welcomed the fact that the Committee continued to support efforts to study radionuclide transfer in the environment. In the 48 years of its work, the Committee had made significant contributions towards rendering the environment more secure. The Committee's findings were used by important international bodies, such as the International Commission on Radiological Protection and various agencies within the United Nations system.

5. She expressed satisfaction with the new programme of work of the Scientific Committee, which included research in the field of radioecology, evaluation of the strength of radon radiation in homes and workplaces, epigenetic effects of exposure to ionizing radiation, evaluation of new epidemiological studies of radiation and cancer, and medical radiation exposures. She also welcomed the continued official cooperation between the Scientific Committee and scientists in Belarus and Ukraine.

6. The member countries and associate members of MERCOSUR affirmed their obligation to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. The international agreements they had signed guaranteed the peaceful use of atomic energy in those countries and allowed the free exchange of materials and technology between their scientific institutions.

7. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) noted with regret that budgetary constraints had forced the Scientific Committee to reschedule its fifty-first session. His delegation again urged that the Committee should be given the resources to perform the important task assigned to it as long ago as 1955, namely the protection of human life against the dangers of radiation.

8. The Scientific Committee distinguished in its reports between two radiation sources: natural and artificial. Mankind was unable to stop natural radiation, for instance from outer space. Increases in its level could, however, be prevented, for instance by, protecting the ozone layer.

9. Artificial radiation sources could in turn be of two origins. Atomic energy could be used for peaceful purposes, such as medicine or power generation. Even peaceful nuclear installations could, however, have radiation leaks that could, even in small doses, be harmful to health. Accidents at such installations led to

catastrophic consequences, as in 1986 at Chernobyl. It should be pointed out that the question of international cooperation to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe had been discussed for several years in the plenary of the General Assembly.

10. Atomic energy could also be used for military purposes, as in the case of the production, testing and use of weapons of mass destruction. Such activities should be terminated in order to prevent a catastrophe affecting all of human civilization. Clear confirmation of the harmful effects of the military use of atomic energy was provided by the current exhibition at United Nations Headquarters of objects that had survived the atomic explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

11. In speaking of the destructive impact of atomic radiation on the entire world, one could not fail to mention the Middle East, where Israel was building civilian and military nuclear installations along the borders with its Arab neighbours. Such installations were a threat to the environment of neighbouring countries and to the life and health of their people. Israel itself wrongly claimed that its neighbours were building such installations. In order to protect States in the region from the harmful effects of the operation of such installations, Lebanon called on the Government of Israel to implement paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and place its nuclear installations under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

12. **Mr. Vitrenko** (Ukraine) said that his country was pleased with the progress made on the new programme of work of the Scientific Committee at its fifty-first session and hoped that the budget preparation process for 2002-2005 would also be successful, so that the Scientific Committee would be able to continue its new programme of work and maintain its current momentum. In that connection, he welcomed the Scientific Committee's decision to hold its fifty-second session from 26 to 30 April in Vienna.

13. Ukraine attached great importance to the scientific findings and conclusions of the Scientific Committee, in as much as its activity related in particular to the study of the radiological impact of the accident at Chernobyl. His country welcomed the fact that the Scientific Committee had included as a priority item in its programme of work further study of the health consequences of the Chernobyl accident and especially welcomed the detailed examination of the question at the most recent session.

14. Being well-endowed for scientific research, Ukraine saw a favourable opportunity for further cooperation with the Scientific Committee, especially in such areas as developing a philosophy of radiological protection for the general public and for workers in industry, research on the use and disposal of radioactive wastes from nuclear technologies, development of a radiological protection strategy covering radiological exposure derived from economic activity (medical and industrial sources) and from background sources and contamination resulting from the Chernobyl disaster.

15. Given the specific sphere of competence of the Scientific Committee, countries with special expertise in the field of atomic radiation should be invited to participate as members in the Committee's work. Ukraine was seeking membership in the Committee.

16. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan was especially concerned by issues relating to the harmful effects of atomic radiation in as much as nuclear tests had been conducted for nearly 50 years at the Semipalatinsk testing ground. It was, therefore, a natural choice for Kazakhstan to reject nuclear weapons and accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Kazakhstan consistently called for steady and phased nuclear disarmament and for universal adherence to international instruments in that field.

17. The nuclear tests conducted over many years at the Semipalatinsk testing ground had caused serious harm to human health over a large area of Kazakhstan. Radioactive contamination had affected extensive crop areas and water resources and severely curtailed economic activity in the area surrounding the testing ground.

18. The adoption of a resolution on the Semipalatinsk region by the General Assembly on 16 December 1997 had shown that the international community strongly supported Kazakhstan in its efforts to overcome the impact of the nuclear testing. His country welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies aimed at the socio-economic and humanitarian rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region. Kazakhstan was, nevertheless, interested in receiving more effective assistance from the international community to deal with the problems of

the region. Noting the General Assembly resolutions and the decisions adopted at the Tokyo International Conference on Semipalatinsk, his delegation called on donor countries to provide the financial and technical resources needed for long-term programmes and projects aimed at rehabilitating the Semipalatinsk region.

19. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the Scientific Committee for the report and other materials prepared for the current session. Kazakhstan was ready to cooperate closely with that Committee in research on the effects of atomic radiation.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.